

## Rwanda fighting kills 20: state radio

AFP, December 1, 1993

NAIROBI, Dec 1 (AFP) - Rebels killed 20 civilians during an alleged raid on a village in northern Rwanda, state radio said Wednesday.

The rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) has denied official radio reports that its forces attacked Kabatwa village and troops stationed at Mutura, in the northwestern Gisenyi province, early Tuesday.

The reported attack would have violated a peace pact signed by the government and the RPF in August to end three years of civil war.

RPF fighters "massacred" about 20 civilians while looting Kabatwa village, according to state radio, monitored by the BBC.

The reports, which were not independently confirmed, said villagers had fled and recalled that 37 people were killed by unidentified attackers in another northern Rwandan village nearly two weeks ago.

But the RPF, which is to enter a coalition government with other

Rwandan parties before the end of the year under the so-called Arusha accords, strongly denied responsibility for the attacks.

"These accusations are part of the campaign of defamation and intimidation," said Jacques Bihozagara, an RPF spokesman.

He said RPF fighters were far from Mutura and Kabatwa and could not have mounted the attack.

The RPF, which draws its support from the minority Tutsi tribe, Rwanda's feudal aristocracy, attacked the forces of the government, dominated by the majority Hutu tribe, in October 1990.

After months of negotiations, the two sides signed Tanzanian-brokered peace agreements in August calling for the formation of a broad-based coalition government and a joint army incorporating rebel fighters and government soldiers.

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